

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Interagency Council on Homelessness



Notes from the Meeting of the Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)

Date and Time: December 11, 2008; 2 pm to 3:30 pm

Location: N Street Village, 1333 N Street, NW

Approximate Attendance: 95

An agenda was distributed.

Note: This meeting was originally scheduled for November 13, 2008.

Welcome and Introductions

Dan Tangherlini, City Administrator (CA) called the meeting to order, stated that an agenda was available, and noted that there had been a number of new appointments to the ICH as well as reappointments. He then opened the meeting for comments from the public.

Public Comment Period

- A resident of the Harriet Tubman Shelter spoke about a number of incidents and situations at the shelter in which she was involved. She also distributed a four page statement.
- Tulin Ozdeger of The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty expressed concern about “sweeps” of those who are homeless during the upcoming presidential inauguration scheduled for January 20, 2009.
- A speaker mentioned that a downtown shelter is still needed.
- Another speaker expressed concern that money earned selling *Street Sense* was not considered income.
- An individual who had been housed under the permanent supportive housing (PSH) program was positive about his experience to date, and he said that the case management service was “working” for him.
- Another speaker said that it was his understanding that there were some individuals in two bedroom apartments while others were on the waiting list. He questioned why this was occurring.
- The final speaker said that he had been on the D.C. Housing Authority’s housing list for six years. He said that So Others Might Eat (SOME) had “saved my life.”

Purpose of the Pre-Meeting Focus Groups and Discussion Summary

- Laura Zeilinger, DC Department of Human Services (DHS), introduced this new opportunity to discuss matters of concern to the homeless community. A focus group (round table) will be held prior to each ICH meeting so that key issues may be discussed in some detail by members of the homeless community with the findings or conclusions

of the discussions presented to the subsequent ICH meeting. This input is sought in order to inform the planning process of the ICH and its committees. Participants are asked to reflect on specific questions or topics and to offer their input and perspectives through both small group conversations and in written comments. The first pre-meeting session was held from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm today.

- Three questions were discussed today:
 - 1A) What should providers of emergency shelter be responsible for providing to those who use their services?
 - 1B) What responsibilities should recipients of emergency shelter have?
 - 2) What are the greatest needs and challenges regarding transportation for those who are homeless in DC today?
- There were approximately fifty participants in four facilitated sub-groups. Each question was discussed for about fifteen minutes, and summaries of the conversations, input, and ideas generated were given at intervals by each group. The output from this pre-meeting session was summarized in a document that is available on the [ICH website](#) at or by contacting [George Shepard](#) (DHS) at (202)576-9159 or at george.shepard@dc.gov.

ICH Committee Reports

Steering Committee – Schroeder Stribling, N Street Village

- This was the first meeting of the ICH that featured a pre-meeting or roundtable session for additional discussion of matters important to the homeless community. This precursory session is designed to give us more feedback from the homeless community so that we are more informed as decision makers and officials.
- The ICH website has been launched, and it may be viewed at www.ich.dc.gov.
- Regarding ICH membership, a list of appointees to the ICH has been released.
- The Steering Committee continues to be concerned about the coordination of committee functions and the structure of ICH committees. It wants to seek ways to ensure better coordination and communications among the ICH committees and any subcommittees that are formed.

Operations and Logistics Committee – Chapman Todd, Catholic Charities

- The committee has preliminary aggregate data on administrative hearings and reviews from the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). It will analyze the data at the committee level, focusing on the timeliness of the administrative review process and the timeline for fair hearings. Upon completion of the analysis, the findings will be presented to the ICH. No schedule has been set for this activity.
- The committee continues to monitor the hypothermia plan and collateral activities, and it reviews issues as they arise. There has been some concern about capacity for both singles and families, but, to date, all individuals and families in need of shelter have been served. The operation of the transportation system is an activity that is being closely watched to ensure that clients are being served properly and efficiently. Input from the pre-meeting round table will inform any actions taken to improve or adjust the transportation system.
- This committee has started to study discharge planning again. The intention is to focus on the health and safety issues involved by examining discharges from jails, prisons, and hospitals. There is a two year old document from a previous discharge planning group

that will be updated, and research that the Urban Institute has done will also be used as source material.¹ The committee plans to meet with representatives from a number of groups, including Corrections, the Hospital Association, and APRA among others. Housing is a necessary resource in successful discharge planning, and it was noted that SOME is particularly active in the area of affordable housing as well as the government's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). In January 2009, DHCD will launch a free housing locator service, DCHousingSearch.org for individuals looking for housing and for property owners and managers that want to list available dwellings located in the District of Columbia. DHCD Director Leila Finucane Edmonds said that there will be 55 landlords represented on the housing search site with 4,000 to 5,000 units of affordable housing listed. A representative from the Department of Corrections (DOC) said that there will be a forum sponsored by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) in February 2009 that deals with supportive housing to address the problem of long-term homelessness.²

Strategic Planning Committee – Clarence Carter, Director, DHS

- Mr. Carter thanked those who have participated in the strategic planning process, and he stressed that the group is not an independent committee but actually a multi-disciplinary team seeking ways to end homelessness.
- The strategic plan will contain policy objectives focused on ending homelessness by helping those in the system to exit quickly. He stressed that there is a sense of urgency around this plan and that we are seeking a “right size” for the shelter system as well as appropriate housing options to facilitate exit from the system.
- We need better connectivity across systems and better data so that we are able to track progress and identify areas that need attention. He noted that we will focus on specific populations in our strategic plan.
- In response to an inquiry about a downtown shelter, he said that we are still working on this issue and that there may be a resolution in early 2009.

Update on the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Initiative – Fred Swan, Administrator, Family Services Administration, DHS

During this presentation, the following points were covered:

- The purpose of PSH is to move those who are homeless into housing with supportive services using a “housing first” approach that was successful for Common Ground, a New York City-based organization that specializes in the development of supportive housing and other research-based practices that end homelessness.
- To date, 403 individuals have been housed under this initiative, and the number is growing. Those who are housed have been assigned case managers from one of six case management providers under contract, and participants receive furniture where necessary and other amenities.

¹ There are three recent research reports by Dr. Martha R. Burt and Sam Hall of the Urban Institute about the homeless assistance system in the District and how to transform it. Access them at www.urban.org. At that website, click on “Browse by Author,” then “Burt, Martha R.,” and then “Homelessness.”

² See www.csh.org for more information on this topic. There is an interesting brief available that is titled “Ending Long-Term Homelessness through Supportive Housing: How Close Are We to Our Goal?” It is dated December 2008.

- We will soon start to house families with a target of placing 80 families in permanent supportive housing. To participate, a family must come through the Virginia Williams Family Resource Center (VWFRC). There have been 350 families assessed to date using a vulnerability assessment instrument similar to the one used for individuals. The survey has additional sections that cover trauma, domestic violence, and CFSA involvement. The assessment is designed to look at the entire family. The families will receive a vulnerability score based on the assessment, they will be prioritized, case managers will be assigned, and then placement in housing will follow.
- This effort has required the cooperation of a number of agencies as well as The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP). Mr. Swan acknowledged the participation of the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA), the Office of Property Management (OPM), the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and the Departments of Health (DOH) and Mental Health (DMH).
- Nan Roman, President and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) and a member of the ICH, asked if the District had applied for family reunification vouchers.³ The District has not applied for these vouchers to date, and DCHA will investigate this potential opportunity. Ms. Roman also asked if there had been an increase in the number of families seeking assistance at the VWFRC, and she was told that the number has increased. The increase was not quantified, however.
- DCHD reported a small increase in foreclosures in the District, and they are trying to prevent foreclosures from growing into a major problem.
- DCHA reported that public housing may be treated as infrastructure in the expected federal stimulus package

Update on Budget Issues of Concern to the ICH, Laura Zeilinger, Deputy Director for Program Operations, DHS

- The Housing First fund in FY 2009 was \$19.2 million, of which \$11.2 million were recurring funds to support 400 individuals and 80 families. There were \$8 million in one time funds to ensure accessible units, for moving expenses, and for other purposes.
- The Council cut \$6 million of the \$8 million in one time funds as well as \$1.1 million from the recurring funds. We are still evaluating the impact of the cuts.
- Mr. Tangherlini said that this money was taken to fund the District's reserves and that we may be able to reclaim the funds if revenue does not deteriorate. He assured the group that we will continue to fight for resources for this program.
- Cheryl Barnes, a member of the ICH, was concerned about housing for women who are homeless, and she was assured that we continue to house individuals every day.
- Ms. Roman, NAEH, said that there was likely to be funding in the upcoming federal stimulus package for rapid re-housing.⁴

³ See Khadduri, Jill. "Housing Vouchers Are Critical for Ending Family Homelessness," *Research Matters*. Homelessness Research Institute, National Alliance to End Homelessness, January 2008. See also National Alliance to End Homelessness. "Family Unification Program: Serving Homeless and At-Risk Homeless Families and Youth," Brief. October 10, 2008. View both publications at www.endhomelessness.org.

⁴ See National Alliance to End Homelessness. "Rapid Re-housing." Brief. July 8, 2008. View this publication at www.endhomelessness.org.

Report on the Progress of the Tri-Agency Collaboration to Improve Services to Youth Who Are Homeless, Judith Dobbins, Executive Director, Covenant House Washington

- The three agencies collaborating in this initiative are Covenant House Washington, Latin American Youth Center, and Sasha Bruce Youthwork. The partner agencies seek to increase shelter bed capacity for youths who are homeless, to provide case management and wrap around services to help the youths involved overcome their poverty and homelessness, and to work with all service providers to improve the service delivery system for these youths. Ms. Dobbins distributed a three page handout titled “Progress Report on the Tri-Agency Collaboration.”⁵
- Two youths who had been served by this program spoke, telling their stories and giving insights as to how this collaboration had benefited them.
- Ms. Dobbins advocated for reactivating the subcommittee that focused on homelessness among the District’s youth.

Public Comment Period

- A speaker asked why the PSH program was on “hold,” and Mr. Tangherlini said that there had been a reduction in funding.
- A speaker from George Washington University suggested that the hypothermia toll-free number, 1(800) 535-7252, should be entered into cell phones for rapid dialing to seek assistance for those who are homeless.
- Eric Sheptock praised the ICH for holding the pre-meeting roundtable session. He suggested better promotion of the roundtable in the shelters. He wants to see incentives created to get people out of homelessness.
- A CCNV resident was dissatisfied because he said that there was no longer case management at that site. He was also waiting for housing under the PSH initiative.
- Mr. Rico Harris, Executive Director of CCNV, said that case management was available at CCNV but that there was no longer funding from the government for this activity. He said that he was interested in having CCNV become a member of the ICH.
- A speaker expressed dissatisfaction with a “give away” by the government of unspecified property in the Southwest quadrant and the cut in PSH funding.
- A speaker complained about the Franklin closure and said that shelters should open at 4 pm regularly instead of 7 pm.
- A representative from the National Coalition for the Homeless noted that the annual vigil for those homeless who died during the year was scheduled for 7 pm at Columbus Plaza at Union Station on Sunday, December 21.

Adjournment

- After the public comment period, Mr. Tangherlini adjourned the meeting.

This concludes the notes from the session.

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Next Meetings

⁵ Contact George Shepard at the DC Department of Human Services at (202) 576-9159 or by email at george.shepard@dc.gov for a copy of the report.

- Wednesday, February 25, 2009 at N Street Village, 1333 N street, NW from 2 to 3:30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Wednesday, April 22, 2009 at Harriet Tubman Women's Center, Building 9, DC General Campus, 1900 Massachusetts Avenue, SE from 2 to 3:30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, June 18, 2009 at DPHW, 309 E Street, NE from 2 to 3:30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, August 20, 2009 at Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G Street, NW from 2 to 3:30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, October 22, 2009 at a location to be determined from 2 to 3:30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.
- Thursday, December 17, 2009 at a location to be determined from 2 to 3:30 pm. The pre-meeting roundtable session will take place from 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.

Meeting dates and times are subject to change.

Date of this document: February 10, 2009; revised February 18, 2009